

In the Claims:

Kindly rewrite the claims to read as follows:

1. (Currently amended) Sluice system for a vacuum coating facility for coating substrates moved through the vacuum coating facility in at least one direction of conveyance, comprising:

a prevacuum sluice chamber, ~~to which~~ a prevacuum pump system is connected by means of a first selectively activatable valve arrangement to the prevacuum sluice chamber, and a high-vacuum pump system connected to the prevacuum sluice chamber by ~~means of~~ a second selectively activatable valve arrangement, the second valve arrangement being activated and deactivated inversely to the first valve arrangement to realize a pressure cascade in a sequential operating mode until a high vacuum pressure stage is achieved in the prevacuum sluice chamber close to a coating process vacuum pressure.

2. (Previously presented) Sluice system according to Claim 1, wherein the prevacuum pump system comprises at least one Root pump as a main pump and at least one rotary slide-valve pump as a backing pump .

3. (Previously presented) Sluice system according to Claim 1 , wherein the high-vacuum system comprises at least one turbo-molecular pump as a main pump , and at least one backing pump arrangement which corresponds to a backing pump arrangement of the prevacuum pump system .

4. (Currently amended) Sluice system according to Claim 1, wherein the prevacuum pump system is selectively connectable to the high-vacuum pump system .

5. (Currently amended) Sluice system according to Claim 4, wherein the prevacuum pump system is selectively connected to the prevacuum sluice chamber in a first operating state and, alternatively, is activated in a second operating state as a backing pump arrangement of the high-vacuum pump system, and wherein the high-vacuum pump system comprises a support pump , which is activated in the first operating state as a backing pump

arrangement of the high-vacuum pump system .

6. (Currently amended)      Sluice system according to Claim 5, wherein a pressure side of a main pump of the high-vacuum pump system is connected to an intake side of the support pump and detachably connected to an intake side of a main pump of the prevacuum pump system in parallel to the support pump by means of a bypass line and a bypass valve , and wherein the bypass valve is activated inversely to the first valve arrangement .